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The Relation of Priests to Sacrifice before the Exile

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§ 1. *Priests in the early narratives of the period of the Judges and David.*

The story of Micah and his priests¹ offers the most interesting material. Micah lived in the highlands of Ephraim, a private man, but maintaining a considerable establishment. One feature of it was a shrine, with an oracle. The first priest whom he had was his son, whom he consecrated for the purpose. This arrangement was satisfactory until there appeared a professional priest, a Levite, unemployed, seemingly seeking employment. Here Micah saw a rare opportunity to improve upon earlier conditions. He hired the Levite for a stipulated sum, and congratulated himself on the results. Later a migrating tribe, Dan, came that way, after the region had been explored by a company of scouts. The scouts had been surprised to find there so well ordered a sanctuary; they had made use of it to inquire of God; and now they recommended that the tribe appropriate the whole establishment. The Levite was not reluctant, for it was a much better position that was offered him. His case was much like that of Dinah as described by Renan in his *Histoire du peuple d'Israel*. The painstaking translator makes him say of her, "Dinah was not done violence to, she was merely eloped with." The Levite went with the Danites, and the apparatus which he took with him is described as consisting of the ephod, the teraphim, and the graven

¹ Judges 17, 18.

image.² The scope of the story seems to require here the mention of all the essential features of the sanctuary, and we may assume that these objects comprised its furniture. Of an altar and its utensils, and of sacrifice and its apparatus, there is no mention throughout the whole circumstantial narrative. The priesthood is in existence, and that not in its crude beginning. Although there is but one priest in the story, he is one of a trained guild, and evidently its members confined themselves to the one calling. The sanctuary, too, is fully equipped. Sacrifice, however, is wholly ignored in the passage. It is also significant that the priest appears in the pay of another, acting in his stead, and acceptable to him, because he considers him acceptable to God.

In Saul's time Ahijah, a priest, is with the army, with the ephod,³ and is wont to advise the king by its means with reference to such matters as giving battle and the discovery of treachery.⁴ There is a city of priests, Nob,⁵ with ephod and shewbread, and various memorials. When David wishes aid of the priest, he asserts that he is in the king's service and the help is promptly rendered. When Saul discovers that the priest has aided his enemy, he does not scruple to punish the whole company of priests as he would any other subordinates whom he considered disloyal to him. They were his own subjects, as the priest was in Micah's pay. David also has a priest with him,⁶ who inquires of Yahwe for him; and when he becomes king, he directs the movements of the priests as a matter of course. It was one function of the priests to carry the ark, as in the narrative of the rebellion of Absalom.⁷ The sacred objects under the charge of the priests were preserved in enclosures of various names.

§ 2. *Altars and sacrifice as described in the same early narratives.*

Gideon entertained the mal'ak unawares at Ophrah,⁸ out

² 18 20. If "graven image" is a redactional addition, our use of the passage is not affected.

³ 1 Sam. 14 8. 18, LXX.

⁴ 14 36.

⁵ 1 Sam. 21.

⁶ 1 Sam. 23 9, 30 7.

⁷ 2 Sam. 15 24.

⁸ Judges 6 11.

of doors, under a terebinth. He gave him lavish food, and because the guest was the messenger of Yahwe, the food became a sacrifice, and the rock on which it was served an altar. So the rock where Samson's parents received the visit of the mal'ak⁹ became an altar. And numerous other altars and sacrifices are mentioned incidentally, without the slightest reference to priests in connection with them.

The story of Samuel and Saul at the sacrifice is the most important testimony for this period.¹⁰ Saul and his servant in search of the lost asses come to the land of Zuph, to a city stated (in the commentaries) to be Ramah. They inquire for the man of God, and find Samuel, who invites them to a great sacrifice. It is to be to-day at the high place, and the people will wait for Samuel to bless the sacrifice before they eat it. The feast is eaten in a room לִשְׁכָּה, and the guests come by invitation. Samuel invites Saul, as he has presumably invited the rest, and gives directions about the food. The narrative has a clear mark of antiquity in the name רֹאִי applied to Samuel, which demands and receives an explanation; but there seems no consciousness of any incongruity in the description of the conduct of the sacrifice. The only official present was the prophet, and the duty which he performs, and for which the people will certainly wait, is one not performed by priests even in the sacrificial ritual of P. It could be nothing ritually prescribed for a sacrifice, but seems to be a mark of honor bestowed on the prophet, unless indeed we regard it as the sufficient evidence that he is the host at this feast, which is also a sacrifice.

After the victory over the Philistines, Saul discovers¹¹ that the army are eating with the blood. He bids them bring their animals to a great stone where he makes an altar; there they are to eat properly without the blood. There were priests with the army at the time, as is expressly stated, but no mention is made of them in this connection, although the whole emphasis in the incident is upon the

⁹ 13 19 ff.¹⁰ 1 Sam. 9.¹¹ 1 Sam. 14 31 ff.

correct method of feasting. Later we read¹² that it was Gad the seer who counselled David to build the altar, at the threshing floor of Araunah.

The evidence then uniformly supports the view that there was no sacrificial priesthood in Israel down to the time of the temple; and sacrifice was certainly so well established by that time that it is safe to eliminate priestly ritual from our thought of its essential character. Thus far, moreover, there is no evidence that sacrifices are prescribed. And these two statements are really one; for if they were prescribed, it must have been at the hands and under the control of priests, and if priests and their attendance had been essential to the proper performance of sacrifice, it would not have remained very long wholly voluntary.

§ 3. *Priests in the early narratives of the Pentateuch.*

We proceed now to inquire how the tradition preserved in these early narratives (we can now call them J and E), pictures the customs of still earlier times, as regards priests. There is in fact only the slightest mention of them in these sections of the Pentateuch. The priests in Egypt are said¹³ to have had a portion from Pharaoh. There was a priest of Midian, later Moses' father-in-law, represented by E¹⁴ as possessed of flocks and daughters. During the wanderings, Jethro made his son-in-law a visit,¹⁵ praised his God exceedingly, "took burnt offerings¹⁶ and sacrifices לֶאֱלֹהִים, and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."¹⁷ This reads more like the description of an ordinary banquet with sacrificial accompaniment than like a sacrifice arranged by Jethro in his character as priest; and we take it, not as proving that a priest must be at every sacrifice, but that he may be there, and if he is present, he acts very much as any other man acts; in this particular passage he is host as was Samuel above.

¹² 2 Sam. 24.

¹⁴ Ex. 2 16 ff.

¹⁶ Plural, Kittel after the versions.

¹³ Gen. 47 22. Or is this J²?

¹⁵ Ex. 18.

¹⁷ V. 12.

Priests are again mentioned at Sinai, where they are described as those that come near Yahwe.¹⁸ On this occasion they are charged not to break through the established limits in order to come to Yahwe. At the crossing of the Jordan¹⁹ the ark was carried by the priests. Likewise at the capture of Jericho,²⁰ where priests also blew the rams' horns. With these two passages in view, it is safe to say that when it is stated²¹ that during the wanderings the ark went on in advance of the people to locate the camp, it was carried by the priests.

The representation of Aaron in the latest literature as a priest with ritual duties is so familiar to the reader of the Bible that it is worth while noting just what is said of him in the narratives of J and E. In these sections Aaron is called Moses' brother, the Levite,²² of fluent speech. He is represented as Moses' assistant in Egypt and in the wanderings. With Hur he helped Moses hold up the rod of God to secure victory over Amalek.²³ He was among those called to Jethro's feast.²⁴ He and Hur were appointed temporary judges while Moses was on the mount. While Moses tarried aloft he made a golden calf,²⁵ and built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast on the morrow. "And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."²⁶ If it were not for the later view of Aaron as priest, no one would assume that on this occasion he was exercising a distinctly priestly function in connection with the sacrifice and festival of the people. It would be ludicrous to suppose that his proclamation of a feast imposed an obligation of sacrifice upon the people, such as, for example, was done by the priestly code. In this case, as all along, Aaron is acting as Moses' assistant and representative. In JE there is no trace of the later view of Aaron as priest. It is true that the title is found in the Deuteronomic review of the history of the wander-

¹⁸ Ex. 19 22.²¹ Num. 10 38.²⁴ Ex. 18 12.¹⁹ Josh. 3.²² Ex. 4. 14.²⁵ Ex. 32.²⁰ Ch. 6.²³ Ex. 17 8 ff. E.²⁶ V. 6.

ings,²⁷ which in the main follows the tradition of JE, but this is valueless as unsupported testimony to the older view.

There is one other passage assigned to JE that mentions priests in connection with sacrifice. In the Blessing of Moses, the section referring to Levi alludes first to the Urim and Thummim, and to his ignoring of family ties in the intensity of his loyalty to Yahwe's service, and then proceeds : —

“They shall teach Jacob thine ordinances,
And Israel thy law :
They shall put incense before thee,
And whole burnt offering upon thine altar.”²⁸

Cutting, as this verse does, squarely across the contention that priests were not concerned with sacrifice in early Israel, of course it must be explained away ! But seriously, there is enough in the text to raise the question whether we have in the verse a genuine JE sentiment, in good order. Confining ourselves entirely to the one verse, and omitting some considerations that are of weight chiefly to those already convinced, the following points may be noted. The noun, קִטּוֹרֶה, with the ending הֶ, is found only here. The word for incense ordinarily has the segholate form of the feminine ending. This is not a serious difficulty, but still is noticeable. Brown treats it as a separate word, calls it masculine, and translates it “smoke of sacrifice,” connecting it with the early and rare meaning of קִטְרָה, rather than with the common meaning “incense” which does not occur before the seventh century.²⁹ Again, the Hebrew translated “before thee,” is בְּאַפֶּיךָ and not the usual לְפָנֶיךָ. It is then, literally, “in thy nostril,” and not plural as the margin of R.V. gives it in the interest of a smooth expression. אֵף as the organ of smell has one parallel in the Old Testament, namely, Ps. 115 6. This is late enough to suggest a late origin of the verse in Deuteronomy. But even in this Psalm it is not used of Yahwe, but of an idol. “Noses have they, but they smell not.” Ordinarily, of course, the word is used for anger ; a

²⁷ Deut. 10.

²⁸ Deut. 33 10.

²⁹ G. F. Moore in *E. B.*, art. “Incense.”

few times for the organ of breathing. If the poet is bound in our passage to speak of Yahwe's nose, doubtless he would choose this word, as the Psalmist does when he will speak about the nose of an idol; but men do not speak thus of Yahwe. They were offering incense to him constantly, and very often Yahwe is said to accept it, but invariably some other expression is used in place of this.

Then the word **כָּלִיל**, translated "whole burnt offering," is strange. The passages where it is found are as follows:—

Lev. 6 22. 23 (Heb. 15. 16 P). Of the meal offering it is said, "By a statute forever (**כָּלִיל תִּקְמָר**) it shall be wholly burnt unto Yahwe; every meal offering of the priests shall be (**כָּלִיל**) wholly burnt. It shall not be eaten."

Deut. 13 16 (Heb. 17). They were to destroy a captured city and its booty, **הַחֵרֶם אֹתָהּ**. "Thou shalt burn with fire the city and all the spoil thereof **כָּלִיל** unto Yahwe."

1 Sam. 7 9. "Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it up a burnt offering **כָּלִיל** to Yahwe." This is assigned to E².

Isa. 2 18. "And idols **כָּלִיל** shall pass away."

Ezek. 16 14. "And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was **כָּלִיל**."

Ex. 28 31 P. "Thou shalt make the robe of the ephod **כָּלִיל** of blue."

Ex. 39 22. As above.

Num. 4 6. A cloth **כָּלִיל** of blue.

Jud. 20 40. In the conflict with Benjamin at Gibeah a great smoke was made in the city, as if it were burning. "And Benjamin turned back and behold there went up **כָּלִיל - הָעִיר** heavenward."

Ezek. 28 12. "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, **כָּלִיל** in beauty."

Ezek. 27 3. The same phrase is used by Tyre of herself.

Lam. 2 15. Same use.

Ps. 51 19 (Heb. 21). "Then wilt thou delight in sacrifices of righteousness **כָּלִיל וְכָלִיל**."

Briggs adds Ps. 50: 2, emending **מְכָלִיל** so that it becomes like Ezek. Of these 14 (or 15) instances, 4 (or 5) are of the type "perfect in beauty"; 3 of the type "wholly of

blue"; 2 of the type "utterly pass away or burn." In all these 9 (or 10), relation to the ritual is wholly precluded. Of the rest, the burning wholly of a devoted city may conceivably have religious significance; twice the word describes the utter consumption of offerings by burning; but in both cases the offerings are specified by their own technical names, and even thus the passages are as late as P or E². Finally, once, Ps. 51, it appears as the name of a sacrifice parallel with עֹלָה and, from a literary point of view, parallel with "sacrifices of righteousness." This passage is of the restoration period.

From this evidence, it seems very improbable that the word acquired its full technical meaning as early as the time of JE so that when it is used alone and unsupported by a parallel name of offering, as here, it can designate burnt offerings. Even if the word can be so used thus early, it must imply a sharp contrast, and here there is no occasion for such suggestion; instead, a broad inclusive term is to be expected. These considerations in favor of a late date are quite apart from the tendency of the verse to connect priests with sacrifice, and are sufficient, it would seem, to destroy any such value as of the time of JE. It is easy to suppose that a late editor, finding no reference in the Blessing to what at his time he regarded as one of the chief functions of the priesthood, inserted this verse to complete the picture, either with poor linguistic skill, or with poor success in the matter of its preservation.

The conclusion then is that in the pentateuchal narratives of J and E nothing is known of a connection of priests with sacrifices.

§ 4. *The early narratives of the Pentateuch.*

References to sacrifice are so numerous in these early narratives, and of such a character, that we are certainly justified in supposing that they represent fairly and fully the practice in Israel, or, to be more exact, the notions of Israel as to the origin of the practices of the times of J and E, practices the origin of which every one was ready to speculate upon. All

the patriarchs built altars and offered sacrifices, and this means, of course, that tradition was busy accounting for the sacredness of certain sites in Canaan. Many were thus explained; shall we say that this list was the complete list? It would be nearer the truth to say that tradition busied itself chiefly with the more important and noted of the sacred sites. The reputation rather than the sacredness of a site determined the story. This habit of referring the origin of sacred locations to the remote past is in sharp contrast with the story of the origin of the ark and its contents, and of the priests in the later narratives. These are referred back to the time of Moses. Thus even in the tradition of their origin, priests and sacrifice are not brought together, as they certainly would have been, had the connection of the two been considered essential.

The primitive codes of both J and E, as extant, ignore the priesthood, although specifying the feasts and the presentation of offerings.³⁰ None were to appear empty before Yahwe; and E's code insures the utmost simplicity of the altar.³¹ Moses built an altar and twelve pillars, and sent young men of the Israelites to sacrifice.³² Balak and Balaam, who built altars and sacrificed,³³ were neither of them credited with a priestly rank.

We have thus examined the evidence down to the time of the temple, and find from this early literature that sacrifice seems to have been regarded primarily as an individual, or at most a family, affair. A man could offer a sacrifice acceptably alone, without calling in any one else for the purpose, and without observing any formality which the writers think it essential to report. If, however, it was a family affair, that very fact tended to give it a greater degree of formality, a result that inevitably attends a function in which the participating group increases in number. But thus far there is no evidence that any one was assigned to sacerdotal duty at an altar in connection with sacrifice. Nevertheless there was in existence an order of priests, with certain

³⁰ Ex. 34 12 ff. J. 20 23-23 E.

³¹ Ex. 20 24.

³² Ex. 24 4 f. E.

³³ Num. 22 40 E, and later.

wellknown functions. These functions had been earlier performed by the patriarchs, just as the patriarchs had performed sacrifices and as heads of the house still did. This early development of the priesthood in Israel may perhaps be accounted for by saying that the priesthood was brought with the tribes of the south as they came into Canaan, while sacrifice as we know it was learned by them from the tribes of the promised land, with whom they joined to make up the people of Israel. The writer feels justified also in concluding from this prior development of the priesthood with functions as stated, the greater simplicity of sacrificial functions. No special guild was required to perform them, for sacrifice was natural, voluntary, and not subject to rules whose infraction would render the service invalid.

§ 5. *Priests in the period of the kingdom, as pictured in pre-deuteronomic narratives.*

In the conflict in David's old age³⁴ over the succession to the throne, a priest is mentioned prominently on each side. Adonijah was supported by Abiathar, and Solomon by Zadok. The ceremony of anointing was naturally enough recorded only in the case of the successful candidate, and it was the priest who performed the ceremony. Priests appear in the lists of Solomon's officers,³⁵ as they had been in the armies of Saul and David. The temple was now built, as the king's sanctuary wherein priests officiated and the sacred objects were preserved. It is now commonly maintained that the only altar in connection with the temple was the old one on the site. The union of the two essentially distinct phases of the religion of the day is doubtless an example of what took place all over the land.

When the temple was completed, priests brought the ark to put it in its place in the new sanctuary.³⁶ The passage describing it has been edited, but the statement is so thoroughly in accord with earlier representations of the priestly duties that there is no reason for doubting its correctness. In the course of his wiping out of Baal worship in

³⁴ 1 K. 1.

³⁵ 1 K. 4 2.

³⁶ 1 K. 8 3.

Israel, Jehu announced a great sacrifice to Baal, and gathered together all his worshippers, including his prophets and priests, and slew them;³⁷ but there is nothing to show the part taken by either class in the sacrifice. Perhaps the writer did not have a very clear idea himself of the transaction or transactions which he is reporting. The verse is a detail under the more general statement³⁸ that "Jehu smote all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his familiar friends, and his priests, until he left him none remaining." The personal attachment of the priests to the king has been repeatedly noted.

In Judah, at this same time, Jehoiada the priest was taking a leading part in overthrowing Athaliah and seating Joash on the throne; and through the whole reign of Joash the priests are much in evidence, especially taking charge of the repair of the temple. The revolution in Judah, as in Israel, involved of course the purification of the worship.

A hundred years later, at about the time of the overthrow of the northern kingdom, Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest³⁹ the pattern of the altar at Damascus. At his direction Urijah made an altar like it, and Ahaz drew near to it, "and he burnt his burnt offering and his meal offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings upon the altar." He changed the location of the altar which was already before the temple, and made a discrimination between the two, the older (brazen) one being reserved for the king to inquire by, if the translation is allowed to stand.⁴⁰ The addition to the apparatus seems to involve an addition to the cult also, and the Damascus altar may well imply Damascus ceremonial. There is evidently an attempt made in the paragraph to explain an innovation, but it needs the key of a better knowledge of the earlier practice in Israel to render us sure of the development. It is clear that there had been one altar, and now there are two, one brazen and one built up; and the one is for certain uses on the part of the king, and the other for more general uses.

³⁷ 2 K. 10 18 ff.³⁸ 2 K. 10 11.³⁹ 2 K. 16 10 ff.⁴⁰ V. 15.

Still later we read ⁴¹ that a priest was sent back from the east to Samaria to instruct the people in the way of the god of the land.

The passages cited are all the passages which give specific information about priests in the literature of the period.

§ 6. *Sacrifices during the same period.*

Sacrifices are not often mentioned in the narratives of the period; and when they do appear, priests are not in connection with them. Solomon offers a thousand burnt offerings on the altar at the great high place at Gibeon.⁴² On the occasion of bringing up the ark to the temple,⁴³ already referred to, the king is said to have made sacrifices, but no allusion is made to participation in them on the part of the priests, although the narrative is explicit that they were present and brought up the ark. The early account ⁴⁴ of the bringing of the ark from the country of the Philistines to Bethshe-mesh represents the harvesters slaughtering the kine and sacrificing. A later element ⁴⁵ represents the Levites as coming up and caring for the ark, but does not connect them with the sacrifice.

It is in this period that the Elijah narrative belongs.⁴⁶ It is made exceedingly interesting from the wealth of detail; and for the same reason it is very important from our point of view, because, from the nature of the case, the detail is sure to cover the full ritual. We may be confident that the participants did not neglect any point of the ceremony at the risk of invalidating it, and the narrator would certainly not overlook in his description any feature the omission of which would give the sceptical reader opportunity to say that Baal refused to answer because of certain serious defects in the ritual. The only officials mentioned as present are the prophets, and the place and the altars are purely occasional. If the presence of priests had been deemed necessary, at either the earlier or the later stages of the tradition, it seems entirely probable that they would have been incorporated in the story.

⁴¹ 2 K. 17 27.

⁴⁴ 1 Sam. 6.

⁴² 1 K. 3 4.

⁴⁵ V. 15.

⁴³ 1 K. 8.

⁴⁶ 1 K. 18.

§ 7. *Priests and sacrifices in the prophetic writings before Deuteronomy.*

In Amos there is one allusion to a priest,⁴⁷ and that is to Amaziah, called the priest of Bethel. With the king's knowledge at least he commands the prophet to cease prophesying against Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, a royal house. From this it is evident that there was hostility between priest and prophet, and if the priests were, in the opinion of the prophet, an important factor in the religious practices which he condemns so heartily (cf. later), he would scarcely have ignored them in his denunciations as he does. In the passage above it is to be noted that it is Amaziah who aggressively opposes Amos. Even in 4 4.5, circumstantial and specific as the picture is, there is seemingly no room for them.

“Come to Bethel and transgress,
To Gilgal and multiply transgression;
And bring your sacrifices every morning,
Your tithes every three days;
And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened,
And proclaim free will offerings and publish them:
For this pleaseth you.”

Still more pronounced is the chapter following, in the passage beginning, “I hate, I despise your feasts.” Here various kinds of offerings and sacrifice are specified, with the names of the instruments of music and the revelry that accompanied them; but there is lacking any suggestion that possibly priestly teaching or usurpation of prerogative was involved or accountable for the sin. Verse 25, “Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?” ought to be good testimony as to the development of sacrifice in the nation, and doubtless would be, were we in Amos' place to understand just what he meant. The burden of his counsel is clear enough. Men are desiring the day of Yahwe for the sake of the joy which they thought it would bring them. It will not bring joy and prosperity, says the prophet. You rely on sacrifices to secure Yahwe's favor. It will not be thus secured, for he

⁴⁷ 7. 10 ff.

hates them. During the wilderness wanderings, when, if ever, he carried you along with the tenderest care, his favor was not secured by sacrifices. Righteousness and justice is the basis of acceptance with him. The picture which he gives of his own day is not that of a prescribed ritual of sacrifice, attributable to priestly self-assertion, but of a people gone wild with feasting, easing their conscience the while with the thought that it has a religious value. However unclear the prophet's exact allusion to the past may be, it seems clear that the priests are not in his thoughts.

Hosea's denunciation of sacrifice is for the same reason as that of Amos. The multiplication of altars is a sin.⁴⁸ They sacrifice flesh and eat it. Ephraim says, "I am rich"⁴⁹ and his feasting and sacrificing follows. Sin they disclaim, but they multiply sacrifice nevertheless. It is a pleasure and license, and not an obligation laid upon them. And the punishment is of a kind with the wrong; their sacrifices they will have to eat. It shall be the bread of mourners, which cannot come into the house of God;⁵⁰ their feasting will be simply feasting, with no religious value. Hosea's familiar figure of idolatry as harlotry rises naturally in the mind of one familiar with the conditions, as the feasting⁵¹ with harlots on hilltops under oaks and poplars and terebinths because the shade is good seems to have been a feature of the revelry. This, however, is not a picture of a system developed as a legal requirement under the direction of priests, as the post-exilic sacrifice under the priestly code. It is a practice that developed spontaneously, under the influence of popular causes and of mistaken popular notions of religion.

Hosea makes frequent mention of priests and holds them responsible, along with other leaders, for the moral delinquencies of the people. He charges them with crimes, even with murder.⁵² The fourth chapter is instructive; he begins with a picture of the country, "there is no truth nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land;" and the priests are responsible: "My people are destroyed for lack

⁴⁸ 8 11 ff.

⁵⁰ 9 4.

⁴⁹ 12. 7 ff. Cf. also 10. 1.

⁵¹ 4 12 ff.

⁵² 6. 9.

of knowledge : because thou hast rejected knowledge I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me : seeing thou hast forgotten the law⁵³ of thy God, I also will forget thy children." He further describes them as feeding on the sin of the people and setting their heart on their iniquity. Idolatry and sacrifice are first mentioned later, and in the paragraph describing them priests are not mentioned. Feeding on the people's sin does not naturally refer to their sacrifices, but to the sinfulness described above. Idolatry and sacrifice may be sinful, but moral questions are thus far in the prophet's mind. Hosea is as far removed as Amos from laying emphasis upon priests in connection with sacrifice (contrast their connection with the law), although he does not spare them in his denunciation of all leaders for leading the people astray.

Isaiah's own writings come only slightly into account. He says⁵⁴ that Yahwe is satiated with sacrifices ; and he (or an editor) does not include priests in the list of rulers whom he denounces.⁵⁵ If the temple and the altar had brought to others the same vision which came to Isaiah of God's glory and their own unworthiness, on the one hand, and their glorious mission on the other, the course of Israel's religious development would have been very different.

Micah bears the same testimony to sacrifice as the other prophets already mentioned. He states the fundamental difficulty very clearly.⁵⁶ The sin of the soul cannot be atoned for by anything less than righteousness of soul, not even by giving up the fruit of the body. Priests he mentions⁵⁷ only to rebuke them for their venality. They teach for hire, as the prophets divine for money, and the heads judge for reward. This carries us back to the earlier statements of the teaching function of the priests. And this teaching function must not be supposed to be confined to the correct method of performing rites of worship. If it had been thus specific and technical, certainly the particular subject of the teaching would have been more definitely in

⁵³ Certainly not the rules governing sacrifice !

⁵⁴ 1 11 ff.

⁵⁵ 3 1 ff.

⁵⁶ 6 6.

⁵⁷ 3 11.

mind when authors make mention of the teaching. If, for example, the teaching meant the instruction in the proper method of sacrifice in order that it should be acceptable to God, the allusion would have been to the subject of sacrifices, and not simply to the teaching. Moreover, it is impossible to account for the uniform omission of priests in descriptions of sacrifice by saying that their presence was assumed as a matter of course. It is true, what had once been a custom might well have been taken for granted in later times, but we cannot go so far along this line as to assume the custom itself, for the existence of which there is no good evidence in the history of the people. And it does not seem justified to rely upon comparative study of Semitic religion entirely, and assume the practices of other tribes as the custom in Israel. It is specially to be noted that the feature of religious ceremony against which these early prophets protest vigorously is that which is clearly allied with the Canaanitish religion.

§ 8. *The story of Eli.*

The interesting reference to the priesthood in the narrative of the boyhood of Samuel⁵⁸ has been left to this time, for it is assigned to a period shortly before the Deuteronomic code. Eli, the father, is called priest, and Hophni and Phineas, his sons, are priests. It does not easily appear how the title "the" priest as applied to Eli can be used to show that there was at this time a clearly defined difference of rank which later developed into the high priesthood. The relation of father to son is enough to explain all the difference of rank that is observable in the narrative, especially if we add the evident old age of the father. The title "the priest" is not an exclusive title, and need have no more particular force than the title "the prophet." The hereditary feature of the priesthood would be more of an argument for differences in rank, were it not that in this very narrative the succession was broken under the power of another principle, which is thus proven to be superior to the hereditary principle.

⁵⁸ 1 Sam. 1 ff.

Eli had nothing to do with the sacrifices, and did not even know of the irregularities of his sons in regard to them. But he did (shall we say continue to?) give counsel, in this case to Hannah. He was served by the lad Samuel, and gave him counsel as to his message from God. His was the more important function, the one that connects him with the earlier priesthood, if we understand it correctly. Hophni and Phineas came into connection with sacrifices. Their concern with them was by way of collecting their dues. Their right to portions from the sacrifices is conceded in the narrative. The irregularity which was discovered by the worshipper, or at least by the tradition and the editor, was in their demanding too great an amount, and in demanding it before it had been cooked in the way chosen by the worshipper. May we not find in this latter case an allusion to the notion that the priests were members of the company of feasters, and so had a rightful share in the food; and that this notion was violated by their taking a portion before it was prepared for the feast? Evidently the narrative reveals a stage in the process of fixing the method and the amount of the revenues to be allowed the priests from the offerings. Supposably they always had had their living from their profession, and it is perfectly natural to suppose that in the grouping together of the several elements of worship in certain sanctuaries, of which they had the general care, an allowance should be made them from the sacrifices which were brought in. This development, however, did not necessarily involve the assumption of control over, or sacerdotal participation in, the rite of sacrifice. In the case in hand, the two priests confine their self-assertion to the improper demand of portions. The position of Eli is the more dignified one, and seems to favor the view that we are maintaining, that priests took but a subordinate part in sacrifice, and that their connection with sacrifice was a subordinate part of a priest's function.

If we ask what development there was, if any, in the matter under discussion during the period of the monarchy, we find that there was a development, and that it

corresponded with the political and social changes that took place, being in fact part of them. Territorial divisions supplanted tribal relations, sanctuaries became fixed, and fixed sanctuaries developed fixed officials. Cities developed, and uneven development of cities was accompanied by uneven development of sanctuaries. The more business there was at the sanctuary, the greater the number of attendants required to do the work, and the more common the relegation of various parts of the work to these various attendants. The social element of worship developed a relatively great importance, and with its inevitable tendency to extravagance and formality, became a matter of great concern to the prophets. Very likely there was a decrease in personal private worship, especially in the entirely spontaneous and informal sacrifice of earlier times. But there seems to be no indication that this development had thus far led to an idea that the intervention of the priests was essential to the validity of sacrifice, or that their growing concern in them was anything more than the laying of more of the work involved upon servants.

§ 9. *Priests and sacrifice in the Deuteronomic period.*

As we come down to the Deuteronomic literature, the question is not whether priests had any connection with sacrifice, for it is obvious that they had; but whether their connection was an essential one. Has the theory of sacrifice been modified so as from now on to require the presence and participation of a recognised priest? The answer must be negative. It will, of course, be impossible to treat the two sides of the subject separately.

Deuteronomy starts from the same position that is assumed by the prophets, that the multitude of sacrifices here, there, and everywhere throughout the land was injurious to the interests of a pure religion. The reasons assigned need not be the same; and the remedies proposed by the prophets and by the code will not necessarily be the same. The prophets opposed them by appealing to the people in the interest of a more spiritual type of religion. This emphasis was, of course, impossible in the case of legislation; indeed it remains even

to this day very largely an ideal. When those interested applied themselves to the task of reforming religious customs by legislation, Deuteronomy resulted.⁵⁹ The many sacrifices were legislated out of existence. Thereafter their meaning and their method must be learned by performing them at a central sanctuary. There a prescribed ritual must be observed. Sacrifices to Yahwe outside of Jerusalem, and sacrifices to other gods than Yahwe, suffered one and the same fate. The reforms instituted on the basis of the code reveal the fact, which could not fail to have arisen, that in addition to, and very likely largely superseding, the free and entirely spontaneous sacrifice without attendant and with varying formality, there were many high places equipped for the larger and more ceremonious feasts. Here there were necessarily many attendants; and these places of sacrifice were naturally in connection with the sanctuaries which were traditionally under the charge of the priests.

All this development, however, need not alter the theory of sacrifice to the extent of introducing the priest as essential to its efficacy.

As described in Deuteronomy, all sacrifices are to be offered in the temple at Jerusalem. All feasting elsewhere is to be plain feasting and not sacrifice. Feast the people might, wherever they would, but not with the blood, which previously had been poured upon the altar. If they would make their feast a sacrifice, they must bring it to the temple, except that in certain cases (of tithes) they might sell the article at home, and with the proceeds buy another at Jerusalem.

With the people and their sacrifices there came to Jerusalem also the Levites whose occupation had disappeared. Here they were assigned revenues, and duties of an inferior kind. Also Levites who were possessed of property by means of which they had maintained themselves, if they chose to join their fellow Levites at Jerusalem, were entitled to the same dues. The whole body of Deuteronomic legis-

⁵⁹ We leave until later the question as to the extent to which the code introduces actual reforms, and take it as it stands.

lation, so far as it brings priests into connection with sacrifices at all, concerns the amounts of the dues to be given them, and the method of collecting these dues. Take a couple of illustrations. Tithes are commanded.⁶⁰ They are to be eaten before Yahwe. The offerers were to eat and rejoice, and not forget the Levite. Every third year the tithe is to be laid up,⁶¹ and the Levite and the fatherless are to enjoy it.

Firstfruits are specifically commanded, and the priests' part is dictated as follows:⁶² the offerer is to bring his firstfruits in a basket to the priest of those days, who is to set the basket before the altar. But so little significance is attached to this intrinsically insignificant duty, that in a parallel verse (10) the command reads, "thou shalt set it down before Yahwe"; but it adds "and worship and rejoice, thou and thy house, the Levite and the sojourner."

The three national festivals are enjoined.⁶³ In case of the passover nothing is said of the priests and the Levites. The regulations for the feasts of weeks and of tabernacles command general rejoicing, and Levites are to be numbered among the members of the household.

In the directions which are given⁶⁴ concerning individual sacrifices, the offerings themselves are not commanded, but are assumed as being voluntarily rendered. If any one feature is emphasized, it is the joy and festivity of the occasion. Once and again (cf. 27 7 D²) men are bidden to rejoice, they and their households, and the "Levite that is within thy gates." The Levite, without inheritance, is a party to the rejoicing. Otherwise Levites are not alluded to.

Elsewhere⁶⁵ the revenues of the priests the Levites are

⁶⁰ Deut. 14 22 ff. ⁶¹ V. 28 f. ⁶² 26 1-4. ⁶³ Ch. 16. ⁶⁴ Ch. 12.

⁶⁵ 18 1-8. Vs. 1, 2 read: "The priests the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion nor inheritance with Israel: *they shall eat the offerings of Yahwe made by fire, and his inheritance. And they shall have no inheritance among their brethren*: Yahwe is their inheritance as he hath spoken to them." The sentences in italics, 1 b, 2 a, can be spared. The latter one, 2 a, repeats 1 a; while in 1 b the word "inheritance," meaning Yahwe's sacrifice, conflicts with the common use of the word in this connection. *לֵוִי יִרְדּוּ* is distinctly a priestly word (P). The possible exceptions are this

definitely assigned. Inheritance they shall not have; Yahwe is their inheritance. Instead of inheritance the priests the Levites are given certain parts of the people's sacrifices, "for Yahwe thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of Yahwe, him and his sons forever." This reason bids us look beyond the matter of the sacrifices for the explanation of the meaning of the "standing to minister" which was the assigned duty of the priests. Now in the Deuteronomic review of the history of the wanderings the writer refers back to Moses the setting apart of Levi, and he describes⁶⁶ his duties as being "to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahwe, to stand before Yahwe to minister unto him, and to bless in his name." The custody of the ark we have already noted. The meaning of the standing before Yahwe and the ministering in his name we see illustrated in a passage⁶⁷ which prescribes the proceedings in case of a murder by an unknown hand. It is commanded that the elders of the nearest city shall take a heifer and slay her, and the priests the sons of Levi shall come near, "for them Yahwe thy God hath chosen to minister unto him and to bless in the name of Yahwe; and according to their word shall every controversy and every stroke be." Then the elders are to assert their innocence, and other ceremonies follow. But the occasion is not one of sacrifice, so far as is disclosed by terminology or ritual. The functions of the priests in the case cited above are identical with those more fully described in 17 s ff.⁶⁸ namely, to serve as judges in matters difficult to adjudicate. Their judgment is to be final. One that hearkens not to "the priest that standeth to minister there before Yahwe thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die."

The priests the Levites were to have custody of the law,⁶⁹

verse, 1 Sam. 2 28, in a redactional passage, and Josh. 13 14. This last verse is in a chapter containing sections from D and P. V. 14 is commonly assigned to D. But D has his similar statement in v. 23: "Yahwe is their inheritance." V. 14, with its characteristic priestly "אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה" are their inheritance," can easily be assigned to P.

⁶⁶ 10 s.

⁶⁸ Cf. also 19 17, in the case of perjury.

⁶⁷ Ch. 21 5.

⁶⁹ 17 18.

and their law is to be taken by the king as the basis of the law of the kingdom. The priests in turn received the law from Moses.⁷⁰ In Moses' time they joined the great law-giver⁷¹ in charging the people to obey the law, and a similar responsibility is laid upon them by the code. When the army is disheartened because of an approaching battle, the priest is to address to them encouraging words, and other officials are to do likewise.⁷²

The Deuteronomic code then tends to show that the chief duties of the priests are in the line of the judicial and not the sacrificial. From the sacrifices they receive revenue (though not necessarily all of their revenue, for in earlier times they had been in the pay of the king and others), and we may suppose that this gave them a partial control in the matter, but it did not give them the essential or principal rôle in their performance. In the practical reforms that followed the discovery of the code, it is obvious that the priests had a controlling voice. The political and literary activity of the leaders of the nation in accordance with the new law, if not under its influence, needs no comment.

§ 10. *Priests and sacrifice in the later pre-exilic prophets.*

It remains to examine the group of prophets who wrote in the few years between the promulgation of the law of Deuteronomy and the exile, to discover whether their notion of sacrifice has suffered any marked change from that of their older comrades. Only Zephaniah and Jeremiah have any light to throw upon the question. The former of these says very little. Yahwe will soon cut off the *chemarim* with the priests.⁷³ Princes are roaring lions, judges are evening wolves, prophets are light and treacherous, priests have profaned the sanctuary, and done violence to the law; and he rebukes them all.⁷⁴

Jeremiah the prophet, son of a priest of Anathoth, seems likely to be a competent witness to the responsibility of priests in the sacrificial system of Israel. He is exceedingly severe in his denunciations of the priests, and of other lead-

⁷⁰ 31 9. 25.

⁷¹ 27 9.

⁷² Ch. 20.

⁷³ 1 4.

⁷⁴ 3 8. 4.

ers too, for that matter. His favorite grouping is the same as that of Zephaniah and Hosea, viz., king, prince, priests, and prophets. He felt that he was called upon to oppose like a wall the whole nation,⁷⁵ viz. king, princes, priests, prophets, and people. He rebukes the priests, for they do not ask where is Yahwe;⁷⁶ prophets prophesy falsely and priests rule under their guidance,⁷⁷ they deal falsely;⁷⁸ they and the prophets are profane and wicked in Yahwe's house.⁷⁹ They variously provoke Yahwe to anger.⁸⁰ In the punishments which he predicts, he usually groups them with other classes. They are to be astonished⁸¹ and ashamed,⁸² they are to be filled with drunkenness,⁸³ they are to go captive⁸⁴ and are to be given into the hands of their enemies.⁸⁵

The priests seem to have deserved harsh treatment at Jeremiah's hands, for they were foremost in the opposition to him. There are numerous other references to them, but little that is definite and exact, and certainly nothing which could be construed as connecting them with the sacrificial system in the mind of the prophet. According to this prophet, then, priests are a class holding a position of authority and influence, and guilty of moral delinquencies.

Jeremiah's terminology of sacrifice is rich, partly from the length of his extant writings and his interest in the subject, and partly without doubt because there was in reality a rich diversity of offerings in his day. Altars and high places abound.⁸⁶ Judah's gods are as numerous as her cities, and her altars to Baal are on every street, altars to burn incense to Baal. "Her children remember their altars and their asherim by the green trees upon the high hills."⁸⁷ One short paragraph is very familiar and striking: "Add your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded

⁷⁵ 1 18.⁷⁶ 2 8.⁷⁷ 5 31.⁷⁸ 6 18, 8 10.⁷⁹ 23 11.⁸⁰ 32 32.⁸¹ 4 9.⁸² 2 26.⁸³ 13 18.⁸⁴ 14 18.⁸⁵ 34 18. 20, written after Jeremiah's death.⁸⁶ 11 18.⁸⁷ 17 1 ff.

them, saying, Harken unto my voice, etc.”⁸⁸ The passage is often treated as if it were penned or inspired to teach the post-exilic origin of the priestly code. It is very little different from the complaints and arguments of the earlier prophets. It does not seem that the Deuteronomic reform had so modified or was so effectually modifying the situation as to demand a new doctrine from the prophets to meet new conditions. And one is compelled to wonder if, after all, the great reformation, as it is called, was a great reformation indeed. Centralization was the main issue, and yet some parts of the code seem to contemplate a very incomplete centralization to say the least. What was the reformation and what did it accomplish in the matters of which we are speaking? We cannot believe that it was as dramatic as pictured. The narrative largely ignores the time element, both in its causes and in its effects. And it reads like an attempt to make a saint out of the martyr Josiah. As for its causes, it stands at the close of a perfectly natural development. Most of the important sanctuaries had been in the northern kingdom. The code concerns Judah, and in Judah, Jerusalem was already the important place of worship, and there was little of centralization left to be accomplished, and to be attributed to the zeal of a king or to the invention of the Jerusalem priests.

As for its results, confessedly they were short-lived. If it was as sudden and drastic as is described, it must have had a reaction, whether we look for it in the changed policy of a succeeding king, or in the logic of the situation. And after the reaction, who was there to deny bold statements as to the reforms of Josiah? Moreover, the destruction of the city and the captivity was not conducive to thorough sifting of records even if the attempt had been made to secure historical accuracy.

The prophets had preached a reform which had as its object to make true religion penetrate into every human life. The Deuteronomic code had (supposably) taken away all the religion that most men knew. It could not continue.

Men would have forms of worship, and if Yahwe worship was defined as certain rites practised at Jerusalem, then other gods would easily steal away the people's hearts. The land was swept and garnished for the easy entrance of other gods.

The reformation would result in the exaltation of the temple and its ritual, and Jeremiah's words reflect this effect. The reaction, when it came, would not operate to lower the prestige of the temple; it would perhaps raise it still more by extravagancies of various kinds; but it would chiefly bring back the old evil conditions in the country. The complaint of Jeremiah may well be the old complaint repeated; the conditions are not essentially changed. So the prophet again proclaims that acceptance with Yahwe is not by reason of sacrifices, whether many of them, scattered over the country, or costly ones and elaborate ritual in the temple at Jerusalem. He could not be enthusiastic in support of the reform. It was easy for him to ignore it in his prophetic message, because his interest was very distinct from it.

The importance of the Deuteronomic reform of the cult seems to have been greatly exaggerated. In fact the whole course of events was very soon broken off by the exile, and it is a matter of speculation as to what would have happened otherwise. And yet we cannot fail to see that at the time of Josiah the priestly class had greatly increased in influence. For without doubt the code, so far as it conserved the temple cult, does not seriously misrepresent it.

§ 11. *Conclusion.*

The conclusion that the writer reaches for himself is that in early times sacrifices seem to have been offered without even the presence of any one with priestly prerogatives. The gravitation of sacrifices to certain noted sanctuaries and finally to Jerusalem led to an increasing reliance upon the priestly attendants of these sanctuaries for various parts of the ceremonies. At the time of the reformation of Josiah they were receiving revenue regularly from the offerings, and perhaps some of the offerings were invented chiefly for

purposes of revenue; but this was their principal connection with sacrifice. Deuteronomy does not enunciate any different theory in this respect, and in practice did not prove acceptable to the prophets, or epoch-making for the people.

So that, down to the time of the exile, the priesthood may be ignored in the question of the meaning of sacrifice, whether in the attempt to discover its essence we go far back toward the origin of this act of worship, or think to find its meaning in the fullest development of the rite in the years before the exile.